I S T I W A ' INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
Vol. 1, No. 2, Juli 2026
Print ISSN : 0854-4239 || Online ISSN : 3123-8289

Lesson Planning for Islamic Religious Education in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received:
22-07-2026
Revised:
25-07-2026
Accepted:
31-07-2026

Keywords
Lesson Planning, Islamic Religious Education, Merdeka Curriculum, Differentiated Learning, Islamic Education.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lesson planning in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and its relevance to student-centered learning from the perspective of Islamic Education. This study employed a qualitative approach using the *library research* method. Data were obtained from relevant scientific journal articles, academic books, research findings, and educational policy documents. Data were analyzed through identification, classification, interpretation, and synthesis, while data validity was strengthened through source triangulation. The findings indicate that PAI lesson planning in the Merdeka Curriculum is a systematic process integrating Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Sequences (ATP), teaching modules, methods, media, learning activities, and assessment. Planning functions not merely as an administrative document but as a pedagogical design for meaningful learning based on students' characteristics and needs. The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for PAI teachers to develop student-centered, contextual, flexible, and differentiated learning. From the perspective of Islamic Education, PAI planning needs to integrate knowledge, faith, deeds, and morality. Learning should enable students to understand religious knowledge and apply Islamic values in everyday life, thereby developing knowledgeable, faithful, responsible, and morally upright individuals

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis perencanaan pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka serta relevansinya dengan pembelajaran berpusat pada peserta didik dan perspektif Pendidikan Islam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode *library research*. Data diperoleh melalui dokumentasi artikel jurnal ilmiah, buku akademik, hasil penelitian, dan dokumen kebijakan yang relevan. Analisis dilakukan melalui tahap identifikasi, klasifikasi, interpretasi, dan sintesis, sedangkan keabsahan data diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan pembelajaran PAI dalam Kurikulum Merdeka merupakan proses sistematis yang mengintegrasikan Capaian Pembelajaran (CP), Tujuan Pembelajaran (TP), Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), modul ajar, metode, media, kegiatan pembelajaran, dan asesmen. Perencanaan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai dokumen administratif, tetapi sebagai desain pedagogis yang sesuai dengan karakteristik peserta didik. Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan ruang bagi guru PAI untuk mengembangkan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik, kontekstual, fleksibel, dan berdiferensiasi. Dalam perspektif Pendidikan Islam, perencanaan PAI perlu mengintegrasikan ilmu, iman, amal, dan akhlak. Pembelajaran diarahkan agar peserta didik memahami pengetahuan keagamaan serta mampu menghayati dan menerapkan nilai-nilai Islam dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

Kata Kunci: Integrasi, PAI, Pendidikan Pancasila, Pendidikan Multikultural, Kurikum Merdeka.

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Introduction

Lesson planning is a fundamental component of the educational process, as it provides the foundation for teachers in determining competencies, objectives, strategies, activities, learning resources, and assessment. Planning does not merely function as an administrative instrument; it also constitutes a pedagogical process for organizing learning experiences that correspond to students' needs and characteristics. Sound planning enables learning to proceed systematically, purposefully, and flexibly, while providing teachers with room to make adjustments based on students' conditions (Apriyanti, 2023). Consequently, the quality of planning becomes one of the key factors in determining the meaningfulness of the learning process.

The shift in educational paradigm brought about by the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has consequences for the way teachers design learning. The Merdeka Curriculum grants teachers greater latitude to adapt instruction to students' characteristics, the context of the educational institution, and the learning environment. This flexibility shifts the position of lesson planning from mere administrative compliance toward the design of more adaptive learning experiences. In practice, teachers are required to understand curricular demands while simultaneously translating them into relevant objectives, activities, strategies, and assessments (Khair et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic Religious Education learning, curriculum planning needs to be developed in an integrative manner so that it can connect Islamic values with the demands of contemporary development, students' needs, and the challenges of globalization (Mustafidin et al., 2024).

This context becomes increasingly important in Islamic Religious Education. Islamic Religious Education is characterized not only by an orientation toward mastering religious knowledge but also by the formation of attitudes, skills, morality, and students' ability to practice Islamic values. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education lesson planning needs to integrate the aspects of knowledge, attitude, skill, and religious practice. Learning about honesty, for example, should not merely be directed toward enabling students to explain the concept of honesty, but must be designed so that students are able to recognize problems, determine actions in accordance with Islamic values, and apply honest behavior in daily life.

Conceptually, Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the Merdeka Curriculum departs from the Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes provide direction regarding the competencies students must achieve by the end of a given phase. Learning Outcomes are then analyzed to formulate more concrete and operational Learning Objectives. Subsequently, the Learning Objectives are arranged into a Learning Objective Sequence so that the attainment of competencies follows a systematic order. This sequence is then translated into teaching modules and the design of learning activities encompassing content, methods, media, learning resources, activities, and assessment (Afiyah et al., 2024; Hazyimara et al., 2024).

Accordingly, Learning Outcome, Learning Objective Sequence, and teaching modules should not be understood as stand-alone documents. All four form part of a single planning system. Learning Outcomes determine the direction of competencies; Learning Objectives clarify the abilities to be achieved; ATP arranges the sequence of their attainment, while the teaching module translates these objectives into an operational learning experience. In PAI learning, this interconnection needs to be reinforced by the objectives of character formation and the practice of Islamic values.

Lesson planning is also related to the student-centered learning paradigm. Within this paradigm, teachers function not merely as transmitters of content but also as facilitators who help students construct knowledge through learning experiences. Learning activities can be developed through discussion, case studies, problem-solving, practice, projects, presentations, and reflection. This shift in the teacher's role provides students with greater opportunities to be more active in the learning process (Juhriah, 2024).

Student-centered learning also requires teachers to attend to the diversity of students' characteristics. Students differ in prior ability, learning readiness, interest, experience, and needs. Islamic Religious Education planning therefore needs to allow room for differentiated

learning. Differentiation can be applied to the content, process, and product of learning so that students obtain learning experiences suited to their characteristics without losing sight of the learning objectives (Aprillia et al., 2025; Rahmayanti et al., 2025).

In Islamic Religious Education learning, the principle of differentiation can also be understood as a means of providing students with equitable opportunities to develop according to their potential. Fairness in learning does not mean treating every student identically under all conditions, but rather providing support that matches each student's needs. Islamic Religious Education lesson planning therefore needs to take students' diversity into account from the stage of formulating objectives, selecting activities, and providing learning resources through to assessment.

In addition to being differentiated, Islamic Religious Education learning within the Merdeka Curriculum needs to be developed contextually. Religious content becomes more meaningful when connected to the real experiences and problems students face. Content on morality can be linked to communication ethics, bullying, and social media use; fiqh content can be connected to everyday practice and digital transactions; zakat content can be linked to social concern; while content on tolerance can be linked to life in a pluralistic society.

Such contextual learning helps students to see that Islamic teachings are not merely theoretical knowledge but are directly connected to life. The findings of Prakoso et al. (2024) indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning provides room for creativity and project-based learning, although challenges remain in connecting religious concepts with everyday practice. This condition indicates that curricular flexibility needs to be accompanied by teachers' capacity to design learning experiences relevant to students' realities.

Another component inseparable from planning is assessment. Assessment needs to be designed from the outset because it functions to provide information about students' prior ability, development, and attainment of competencies. Diagnostic assessment can be used to determine students' initial readiness and needs, formative assessment is used to monitor the process of development, while summative assessment is used to determine the attainment of competencies after learning has taken place (Yasin et al., 2026). In PAI, assessment also needs to allow room for evaluating students' ability to understand and apply Islamic values.

From the perspective of Islamic Education, Islamic Religious Education lesson planning has an orientation broader than the attainment of academic competencies. Islamic Education positions the holistic development of the human being as an essential part of the educational process. Learning therefore needs to connect knowledge ('ilm), faith (iman), deeds ('amal), and morality (akhlak). Knowledge provides the foundation of understanding, faith provides the orientation of values, deeds constitute the form of application, while morality becomes the manifestation of values in students' behavior.

This framework has consequences for the formulation of Islamic Religious Education learning objectives. The questions that need to be answered in planning are not limited to “what do students know?” but also include “what do they understand?”, “what do they believe?”, “what do they do?”, and “how are these values reflected in behavior?”. Islamic Religious Education lesson planning therefore needs to connect academic competence with the formation of students' personality.

Adaptive and differentiated learning approaches can also support the development of students' religiosity, independence, and sense of responsibility (Maushuli et al., 2025). This indicates that the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum can become an opportunity to strengthen the distinctive character of PAI, provided that such flexibility is directed toward the objectives of Islamic education and does not stop merely at freedom in selecting methods or learning activities.

Nevertheless, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the Merdeka Curriculum still faces a number of problems. Teachers need to possess the ability to analyze CP, formulate TP, develop ATP, design teaching modules, implement differentiated learning, and design assessments. In addition, limited facilities, teacher readiness, school

support, and the learning environment can affect the quality of implementation (Khair et al., 2024; Aprillia et al., 2025).

Based on the discussion above, it can be understood that Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the Merdeka Curriculum is a complex and interrelated process. Planning encompasses not only Learning Outcomes, Learning Objective Sequence and teaching modules, but must also integrate student-centered, contextual, flexible, and differentiated learning, together with ongoing assessment. All of these components need to be directed toward strengthening the values of Islamic Education.

Previous studies have extensively discussed the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education, differentiated learning, teacher strategies, and the use of learning tools. However, discussions that specifically integrate Islamic Religious Education lesson planning, Learning Outcomes, Learning Objective Sequence, teaching modules, student-centered learning, contextual learning, differentiation, assessment, and the perspective of Islamic Education still need to be strengthened. This study is therefore directed toward analyzing Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in an integrated manner.

This study aims to analyze Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, encompassing the interrelationship of Learning Outcomes, Learning Objective Sequence, teaching modules, learning strategies, contextual learning, differentiated learning, assessment, and character strengthening. This study also analyzes how these components can be directed toward the integration of knowledge, faith, deeds, and morality from the perspective of Islamic Education. The findings are expected to provide a conceptual framework for Islamic Religious Education lesson planning that is not merely administrative but also pedagogical, contextual, flexible, student-centered, and oriented toward shaping students who are knowledgeable, faithful, practicing, and possess noble character.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using the *library research* method. This method was chosen to examine and understand various concepts, research findings, and policies related to Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Zed, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data sources for this study consisted of scientific journal articles, academic books, research findings, and educational policy documents related to the Merdeka Curriculum and Islamic Religious Education. The literature used was selected based on its relevance to the research focus, particularly literature discussing lesson planning, Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, Learning Objective Sequences, teaching modules, assessment, contextual learning, and character education. Priority was given to journal articles published between 2021 and 2026, while earlier literature was used as a relevant theoretical foundation.

Data collection was conducted through the documentation technique. The researchers searched various sources using keywords relevant to the research focus, then selected literature based on the relevance of its title, abstract, objectives, findings, and discussion. Relevant literature was subsequently recorded and grouped according to research themes (Zed, 2014).

Data analysis was carried out through four stages: identification, classification, interpretation, and synthesis. At the identification stage, the researchers determined information relevant to the research focus. The information was then grouped according to themes, such as Islamic Religious Education lesson planning, Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, Learning Objective Sequences, teaching modules, learning strategies, assessment, and the strengthening of Islamic values. The grouped data were then compared and interpreted to identify similarities, differences, and relationships between ideas. The final stage was synthesis, namely combining the various findings to obtain a comprehensive understanding of PAI lesson planning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Zed, 2014; Afiyah et al., 2024; Khair et al., 2024; Prakoso et al., 2024).

Data validity was established through source triangulation by comparing information from journal articles, books, and policy documents. This comparison was used to ensure the consistency of information and to strengthen the results of the research analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Results and Discussion

1. Lesson Planning for Islamic Religious Education in the Merdeka Curriculum

The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is not merely related to the preparation of learning tools, but also constitutes a systematic process for determining the direction, objectives, strategies, activities, and evaluation of learning. Islamic Religious Education teachers need to translate curricular demands into learning experiences suited to students' needs. Research on Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum indicates that lesson planning encompasses the preparation of teaching modules, the selection of methods and media, and the adjustment of learning to students' characteristics (Ilahisabila, 2025).

In this context, Islamic Religious Education lesson planning needs to be understood as a pedagogical design rather than merely an administrative document. Teachers must determine the competencies to be achieved, the learning experiences to be provided, the learning resources to be used, and the appropriate form of assessment. Sound planning enables the learning process to proceed in a more purposeful manner while providing teachers with room to make adjustments based on students' conditions (Ilahisabila, 2025).

Islamic Religious Education planning also has special characteristics because its learning objectives are oriented not only toward knowledge but also toward religious attitudes and skills. Learning therefore needs to be designed so that students not only understand Islamic concepts but are also able to connect that knowledge with behavior and daily life. Adaptive and student-centered learning approaches are considered capable of helping students understand religious concepts while simultaneously developing religiosity, independence, and a sense of responsibility (Maushuli et al., 2025).

2. Learning Outcomes as the Basis for PAI Planning

Learning Outcomes constitute one of the essential bases in developing Islamic Religious Education lesson planning. Learning Objectives provide direction regarding the competencies students must achieve by the end of a given phase. Teachers therefore need to analyze the CP before formulating learning objectives and determining learning activities.

In its implementation, Learning Outcomes need to be translated into more concrete and observable learning objectives. This process enables teachers to determine what abilities students must possess after participating in learning. Planning is then developed through learning objectives, learning objective sequences, and teaching modules, so that there is a clear link between curricular competencies and learning activities (Hazyimara et al., 2024).

In PAI learning, the analysis of Learning Outcomes also needs to take into account the distinctive characteristics of religious scholarship. The competencies planned should not be limited to the ability to memorize concepts or religious texts (dalil), but need to be directed toward the ability to understand, analyze, apply, and reflect on Islamic values in life. Learning Outcomes can thus be positioned as the starting point of planning, while Learning Objectives and Learning Objective Sequence serve as instruments for translating Learning Objectives into a more operational learning process.

3. Learning Objectives and Learning Objective Sequences

Learning Objectives represent the elaboration of the competencies contained in the Learning Outcomes. Learning Objectives provide a description of the abilities students are expected to achieve after participating in the learning process. In Islamic Religious Education, Learning Objectives should be formulated in an integrative manner, taking into account the aspects of knowledge, attitude, and skill. For example, in content on morality, the learning

objective should not only enable students to explain the meaning of praiseworthy conduct (akhlak terpuji), but should also enable them to identify examples of such behavior, analyze moral issues, and apply that behavior in daily life.

Subsequently, learning objectives are arranged into a Learning Objective Sequence. Learning Objective Sequence helps teachers organize the stages of competency attainment systematically. A study on the implementation of differentiated learning in Al-Islam education found that the planning stage encompasses the analysis of diagnostic assessment and the formulation of Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, Learning Objective Sequence, and teaching modules as a single sequence of lesson planning (Hazyimara et al., 2024). Accordingly, Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, and Learning Objective Sequences should not be regarded as separate documents. All three form a single planning sequence that connects curricular competencies with learning activities.

4. Teaching Modules as Planning Instruments

Teaching modules constitute one of the important instruments for translating planning into learning practice. A teaching module may contain the learning objectives, activities, content, methods, media, learning resources, and the assessment to be used.

The findings indicate that PAI teachers use teaching modules as part of their strategy for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The preparation of teaching modules can also be carried out through teacher collaboration, for instance through Subject Teacher Working Group activities, enabling teachers to exchange experiences and develop learning tools that better suit students' needs (Ilahisabila, 2025).

Islamic Religious Education teaching modules should not merely consist of a description of content but should also be designed to create active learning experiences. Content on morality, for instance, can be developed through case studies of behavior on social media. Fiqh content can be linked to everyday problems, while zakat content can be developed through social-concern projects. Teaching modules can thus become a bridge connecting the curriculum, PAI content, learning experiences, and students' real lives.

5. Student-Centered Learning

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum encourages more student-centered learning. In Islamic Religious Education learning, teachers act not only as transmitters of content but also as facilitators who provide students with opportunities to be active in the learning process. Learning can be conducted through discussion, problem-solving, case studies, practice, projects, presentations, and reflection. This approach enables students to construct understanding through more active learning experiences.

Studies on differentiated Islamic Religious Education learning within the Merdeka Curriculum indicate that adjusting content, learning stages, and learning outcomes to students' characteristics can create a more meaningful and student-centered learning experience (Maushuli et al., 2025). From the perspective of Islamic Education, student-centered learning also provides room for the more balanced development of intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual potential.

6. Contextual Learning in Islamic Religious Education

The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education learning needs to be designed contextually. Religious knowledge becomes more meaningful when students are able to connect the content they study with their life experiences. Contextual learning can be carried out by connecting Islamic Religious Education content with the family environment, school, community, culture, and technological development. Teachers can use real problems as discussion material so that students do not merely understand religious concepts theoretically. For example, content on morality can be linked to bullying, communication ethics, and social media use. Fiqh content can be linked to digital transactions, while zakat content can be linked to issues of poverty and social concern.

Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies in implementing the Merdeka

Curriculum also show the use of varied, vocational-context-based methods as well as the utilization of digital media in learning (Ilahisabila, 2025). The development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum also needs to attend to the integration of religious moderation values and the use of information technology so that learning can respond to contemporary developments and become more inclusive, contextual, and engaging for students (Panuntun et al., 2026). This indicates that Islamic Religious Education learning needs to move from learning oriented solely toward content mastery to learning that connects religious knowledge with real life. The transformation of Islamic Religious Education learning in facing the developments of the digital era demands curricular innovation capable of integrating Islamic values with technological development, students' needs, and social change, so that learning becomes more relevant and adaptive (Basyiroh et al., 2026).

7. Differentiated Learning in Islamic Religious Education

The diversity of students' characteristics is an important consideration in Islamic Religious Education lesson planning. Students differ in prior ability, interest, learning readiness, and learning style. Teachers therefore need to provide learning that can accommodate these differences. Differentiated learning enables teachers to adjust instruction based on students' readiness, interest, and learning profile. In Islamic Religious Education, this approach can be implemented through differentiation of content, process, and learning product (Aprillia et al., 2025).

Other studies indicate that the application of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education can have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes. Learning that adjusts to individual needs enables students to obtain learning experiences better suited to their abilities (Rahmayanti et al., 2025). Differentiation thus represents one form of implementing the principle of fairness in learning. Every student is given the opportunity to develop according to their characteristics, while still being directed toward the established learning objectives.

8. Assessment in Islamic Religious Education Lesson Planning

Assessment is an integral part of lesson planning. Assessment functions not only to measure learning outcomes at the end of instruction but can also be used to determine students' initial condition and to monitor their development during the learning process. In Islamic Religious Education learning, diagnostic assessment can be used to determine students' prior knowledge, learning readiness, and needs. The results of such assessment can then serve as the basis for determining appropriate learning strategies (Yasin et al., 2026).

Formative assessment can be conducted during the learning process through questions, discussion, assignments, observation, and reflection. Summative assessment, meanwhile, is conducted to determine students' attainment after completing a unit or period of learning. Research on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education assessment also indicates that the assessment process encompasses the stages of planning, implementation, processing, reporting, reflection, and follow-up. Assessment must therefore be designed from the outset and aligned with the Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, and Learning Objective Sequences, learning activities, and the competencies to be achieved.

9. Character Strengthening through PAI Learning

Islamic Religious Education occupies a strategic position in strengthening students' character. The Merdeka Curriculum provides room to develop learning that is oriented not only toward the mastery of knowledge but also toward the development of attitude and character. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, concern for others, cooperation, and respect for others can be incorporated into learning activities. Group work, for example, can be used to build cooperation, social projects to develop concern for others, and reflection to build self-awareness.

Differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education has also been reported to help not only in understanding religious concepts but also in developing students' religiosity, independence, and sense of responsibility (Maushuli et al., 2025). From the perspective of

Islamic Education, this character strengthening is closely related to the formation of noble character (akhlakul karimah). The success of Islamic Religious Education learning is therefore determined not solely by academic scores but also by students' ability to apply Islamic values in life.

10. Challenges in Implementing Islamic Religious Education Lesson Planning

Although the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning still faces a number of obstacles. One of them is teachers' readiness to understand and apply the principles of differentiated learning, along with limited supporting facilities.

Research on the implementation of differentiated Islamic Religious Education learning indicates several obstacles, including limited facilities, teacher readiness, the low motivation of some students, and insufficient parental support. On the other hand, school support, flexible teaching modules, Subject Teacher Working Group, and teacher training serve as factors supporting implementation (Syarief et al., 2026).

Other studies have also found that the implementation of differentiated learning requires comprehensive support and the strengthening of teacher competence in order to proceed optimally and sustainably (Aprillia et al., 2025). This indicates that the success of Islamic Religious Education lesson planning depends not only on the quality of the documents teachers produce, but also on teacher competence, school leadership, facilities, collaboration, and academic culture.

11. Islamic Religious Education Lesson Planning from the Perspective of Islamic Education

Viewed from the perspective of Islamic Education, Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the Merdeka Curriculum has considerable potential to integrate academic competence with the formation of students' personality. Islamic Religious Education learning needs to be directed toward the integration of knowledge, faith, deeds, and morality. Religious knowledge provides the foundation of understanding, faith provides the orientation of values, deeds constitute the form of implementation, while morality becomes the manifestation in behavior.

Therefore, Islamic Religious Education learning objectives should not stop at the question “what do students know?” but also need to answer “what do students do after knowing?”. Adaptive and differentiated learning approaches can help students develop religious understanding along with religiosity, independence, and a sense of responsibility (Maushuli et al., 2025). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can thus become an opportunity to strengthen the distinctive character of Islamic Religious Education, provided that curricular flexibility remains directed toward shaping students who are knowledgeable, faithful, practicing, and of good character.

Conclusion

1. Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a systematic process that integrates Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, Learning Objective Sequences, teaching modules, methods, media, learning activities, and assessment. Planning functions not only as an administrative document but also as a guide for creating purposeful learning that corresponds to students' needs and characteristics.
2. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides room for Islamic Religious Education teachers to develop learning that is student-centered, contextual, flexible, and differentiated. Religious content needs to be connected to real life so that students not only understand religious concepts but are also able to internalize and apply Islamic values in daily life. Assessment also needs to be an integral part of planning in order to determine students' development and attainment of competencies.

3. From the perspective of Islamic Education, Islamic Religious Education lesson planning needs to integrate knowledge, faith, deeds, and morality. The learning objectives are thus intended not only to produce students who possess religious knowledge, but also students who are able to practice Islamic values in life. Islamic Religious Education lesson planning within the Merdeka Curriculum is ultimately directed toward shaping students who are knowledgeable, faithful, practicing, of good character, and possess noble conduct (akhlakul karimah).

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